

2-, 3-, 4-month deals, that is disastrous to this economy.

I have heard and talked to business leader after business leader, from associations, to individuals, to people back in my home State, and they say over and over: Don't do short term. Whatever you decide, give us certainty—certainty.

The unique thing about the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House: Only we would describe long term as 16, 18 months because that is all we can do around here. But short term, as one can imagine, is 3, 4 months. That would be more disruptive to this economy than anything we can imagine because all we do as we shift it—and I can describe this because I understand this business. I have been in it. My wife is in it. Here is what happens. We will have this same debate in November, probably. Here is what happens in November. This is the biggest time for people who are buying. For retailers, this is the most important time—actually, back to school a little bit, but November through December is when people make their expenditures and are buying things, consuming, and spending money in our economy. But people always like to blame Democrats: It is all about government. I come from the private sector. As I said earlier, that is where I made my living. It is an important part of our economy.

So here we are going to debate, create more uncertainty at the most important time, when consumers are going to try to judge what to do. What do they do? Do they spend a little bit extra for a gift for their friend? Do they go on that trip they were planning? Do they make that extra expenditure? Yet we will have the same debate. So long term is important—again, 16, 18 months, but that is better than the short-term plan.

No businessperson has come to me—and I challenge any businessperson: Pick up the phone. Call me. Let me know. Tell me you want a short term, and I will be happy to come down here to the floor and say that. I will mention your company name. I will tell people: This company is interested in short term. I would be happy to do that. I am not going to get those calls because they know that is not the way to run a business, that is not the way to run a household, and that sure as heck should not be the way we run our government.

So there is a clear difference. For all of those people who—I get a lot of pro and con on this issue, calling my office, sending me e-mails—for all of those people who say: Hey, just vote for the Boehner thing, I will tell them why I will not. I want people to understand clearly my position. It is not about, he is a Republican, I am a Democrat. That is irrelevant. It is short term. It is fewer spending reductions. It keeps us in turmoil. It doesn't move us forward. It is all about shenanigans and game-playing and politics. That is what he is presenting.

Now, maybe the Reid proposal isn't perfect. I know there are Republicans

who have some ideas here in the Senate who want to modify it. Great. But it is long term, it has more significant reductions, and it moves us down a path in the right direction. It is not perfect, but I can tell my colleagues that the idea they have over there will not work for this economy.

I have probably spoken too long, but those kids from Juneau and Healy and Anchorage and Kodiak had a great question. When kids are asking that question and they say to me—and I give them the same exact presentation. I say: Here are the differences. I give them the papers and say: Here, you look at it. And they say to me: Why aren't we doing a long term, because these kids are now at an age where they are thinking about their future. They are not thinking about the next weekend; they are thinking about their future. They have a position we could learn a lot from around this place, I will tell my colleagues they made it very clear to me: Whatever you do, make it long term, because they are thinking about their future and where they want to be. It is an incredible commentary when we have kids who have more wherewithal in the sense of their knowledge of what should be done in the body we sit in today. It should wake us up.

The last thing I will note is this. I think about what my colleague from Colorado said about the value of our position in this world when it comes to ensuring that people understand America will stand behind everything we do—the debt we do, the positions we take. As a matter of fact, it was so important, it was written into the Constitution that we should never question the ability to pay our bills.

For those on the other side who like to spout off, and they pull out of their pocket the little portable Constitution—all of us get those; we all have those—and they cite the Constitution, sometimes they forget sections of it. I hope we don't forget this section. We should never be questioned in regard to our debt. We pay our bills. We stand behind what we do. That is what makes our country different from any country in this world.

So I challenge them to get their job done, maybe on the FAA bill, maybe on this issue involving the debt, but the House needs to get their act together—the majority. Let me make that clear. The majority over there needs to get their job done, quit killing things over there, from jobs to legislation, and focus on the work people sent them here—especially the group of 2010—but who sent me here and sent the Presiding Officer here—we were sent here to do a job.

It is outrageous to me that we cannot move forward when it is so simple in the sense of a plan that gets us on a path that is long term and has better spending reductions. Maybe it is too logical. Maybe that is the problem around here: If it is too simple, too logical, it doesn't work. It has to be com-

plicated with a lot of gamesmanship is the only way it works. I want to prove that wrong.

I thank the Chair for allowing me the time to say a few words. Hopefully, the people who are watching us and listening will hear the real debate and cut through all the moment-in-time politicizing. Maybe, hopefully, they will hear those five kids whom I heard and will hear their concerns and what their position is.

So, again, I thank the Chair for the time, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

TRIBUTE TO BERT BLYLEVEN

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to former Minnesota Twins pitcher Bert Blyleven, who this week received his sport's highest honor when he was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame.

To Bert, I offer hearty and well-deserved congratulations.

To the rest of the baseball world, I ask the question: What took so long? In the 14 years since he first became eligible for the Hall of Fame, we in Minnesota all assumed that, with his rare talent and Hall of Fame numbers, Bert was a shoo-in, and for many of those 14 years he was considered the best player never to have been inducted. I am proud to say as a Minnesotan and a lifelong Twins fan that this year Bert Blyleven was officially voted into the Hall of Fame.

People in Minnesota all know Bert belongs on the distinguished list of Minnesota Twins already in the Hall of Fame, including Harmon Killebrew, Rod Carew, and Kirby Puckett, as well as two other baseball greats who grew up in St. Paul, MN, and later played for the Twins and were inducted into the Hall of Fame: Paul Molitor and Dave Winfield. Each of them had Hall of Fame careers, and now Bert has finally joined them.

Bert pitched 22 seasons in the Major Leagues, 11 of them for the Twins, but he also took his talents to Texas, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and California. During his career, he won 287 games, he struck out an amazing 3,701 batters, and is fifth on the alltime career strikeout list, with more career strikeouts than pitching greats Tom Seaver, Walter Johnson, Bob Gibson, Greg Maddux, Cy Young, or even his boyhood idol, Sandy Koufax. He pitched 60 shutouts and led the league in shutouts three times. He had a career earned run average of just 3.31. He pitched 242 complete games, something that would be unheard of today. He played on two world championship teams: in Minnesota, with the 1987 Twins and in Pittsburgh. For Twins fans, we all know Bert was a major part of that

1987 Twins world championship team which we all revere for finally bringing a world championship to our State. And we won again in 1991.

Bert mentioned in his acceptance speech on Sunday that he is the first Hall of Famer born in Holland. He moved to California as a child and became interested in baseball by watching Sandy Koufax pitch for the Dodgers. His father Joe, also a baseball fan, built him a pitcher's mound in the backyard, where he developed one of the best curveballs in baseball history. I would like to think if my dad had built me—no, I don't think so.

Bert finished his playing career in 1992. In 1996, he rejoined the Twins in the broadcast booth, where for many years he and Dick Bremer have become familiar voices to Twins fans all over the upper Midwest. I personally love nothing more than watching a Twins game on TV and listening to Dick and Bert, who, in my humble opinion, are an authoritative and amazingly entertaining broadcast team.

During broadcasts, Bert has created a phenomenon using his telestrator to circle Twins fans who, whether they are in the Target Field or on the road, are holding up signs that catch Bert's interest, and then he will circle them. There is no higher honor for a Twins fan than to be circled by Bert, and every game is packed with fans holding signs that simply say "Circle Me, Bert."

It was great to see that Bert was joined at Sunday's induction ceremony by his wife Gayle, their children, Bert's siblings, and his mother Jenny. During his speech, Bert spoke about his father Joe, who died in 2004 of Parkinson's disease, saying, "I know he is up there right now looking down."

In memory of his father, Bert and his wife Gayle started the "Circle Me, Bert" Web site to raise research money for the National Parkinson Foundation Minnesota. That says volumes about Bert Blyleven. Bert is known in Minnesota for his dedication to other charities and to the community there.

So, once again, Bert, as a lifelong Twins fan, thank you and congratulations. After 14 years of waiting, you are hereby "circled" by the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, where generations of fans from Minnesota and around the country and around the world will know of your career and of your amazing contributions to the game of baseball and to the community of Minnesota.

Thank you very much. I yield the floor and maybe also put in a word for Tony Oliva and also suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator may speak for up to 15 minutes.

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I think it is obvious to the world around us that the atmosphere here is hardly one of comfort or satisfaction. The public does not see the agony of the debate that is taking place, as we watch how dysfunctional the discussion about the national debt has been.

We feel the threat to America's world financial leadership that is lurking around here, and it is not very satisfying to those people whose homes are close to foreclosure or the people who need to be assured that health care is going to be there for them or that their child who can learn can get an education without mortgaging their future or cannot even get a mortgage on that.

So we look around and we watch and we listen and we see that the Republicans in the House and the Republicans in the Senate are in a search for political gain regardless of the cost to our society and our Nation.

I do not make this statement casually. But after months of watching and listening to the targeted goal of politics over the pain that could follow a default, no other conclusion may be drawn. We want to consider the evidence. By way of example, Vice President BIDEN convened a bipartisan working group to find solutions to get the national debt problem over with, get it resolved, and let us go on to our normal and needed debate and business. After that, Republicans walked out. Walked out.

Next, President Obama offered Republicans what he called a "grand deal" that would reduce the deficit by \$4 trillion. Republicans ran away. Now our majority leader, HARRY REID, has proposed a plan that includes more than \$2 trillion in spending cuts, \$1 in cuts for every dollar the debt limit is increased—and not even insisting on a dollar of revenues, which has been suggested several times.

But there is no way of getting through the obstinacy on the other side. Republicans turn their back time after time. Democrats in this Senate and in the White House have offered the Republicans compromise after compromise. But they do not see their target. Their target is to do damage to the Obama administration so that it hurts sufficiently to discount the progress that has been made for our society under President Obama.

Time and time again the Republicans have changed their demands to find reasons to say no. Are we asking the Republicans to do something radical, something that has never been done before? That is certainly not the case. Over the past half century, the debt ceiling has been raised 75 times, almost

two-thirds of those occasions under Republican Presidents. In fact, the debt ceiling was increased 18 times under President Reagan, and 7 times under President George W. Bush.

Our country has never defaulted. So the question that must be raised is: What is different about today? Why, at a time when we already face a real jobs crisis in this country, would Republicans plan for another economic crisis? Why would they do that? Will destroying the economy help Republicans win seats next year when people across our country are already expressing their dissatisfaction with the deadlock they see being displayed?

We heard the minority leader say his No. 1 priority is stopping the President from winning another term. What a goal that is. He is our President, elected by the people of the country. He has a term of 4 years and will be up for reelection. We hope and we pray that he continues to be the President of our country. What good does it do to target the system?

Make known what it is they stand for. So far we have seen that they stand for nothing that is helpful to the average American. So what we need is a chance to have an honest discussion. Insecurity reigns as people grow more and more conscious about their inability to afford the basics of life, jobs, health care, education. They see prices being raised around them as their purchasing power shrinks. Look at the price of gasoline. You see a perfect example of what is happening. We had one Republican Presidential candidate who was asked: "Does it strike you that as the unemployment rate goes up your chances of winning office also go up?"

Do you know what her answer was? She said, "I hope so." Hope so. What an outrageous thing to say from the halls of government, the high halls of government. I hope so. I hope that unemployment goes up, says she, so she might have a chance to win office. How cruel that statement is.

Make no mistake, if the United States Treasury runs out of cash next week, the principal burden will fall on middle-class families. But the effects on our total economy will be devastating as well. We may not be able to send out Social Security checks to seniors, benefit checks to veterans, the people who serve the country. Let's stop paying them? Or paychecks to the men and women who now bear our country's uniform in Afghanistan and Iraq. Sorry, we cannot pay you. Is that what we are going to say?

Interest rates could rise almost immediately, greatly increasing the cost of mortgages, car loans, student loans, credit cards, you name it. If middle-class Americans think their 401(k) plan suffered during the Wall Street crisis a few years ago, imagine what will happen to the markets if the U.S. Government cannot pay its bills, or redeem bonds that are ordinarily turned in for cash.